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ART. IX.—*Harvard University.*

Letter to Governor Lincoln in Relation to Harvard University. By F. C. GRAY. *Second Edition, with an Appendix.* Boston. Carter, Hendee & Babcock. 1831.

The author of this pamphlet, who is a member of the Corporation of Harvard College, has undertaken to defend that institution against certain charges which have lately been made upon it in the newspapers. The work is written with great ability, candor, and vivacity, and has been, we believe, very generally satisfactory to unprejudiced readers. Of the charges alluded to, the most important is that of *sectarianism* in religion; and the reply to it occupies a pretty large portion of Mr. Gray's pages. We cannot, however, follow him in this discussion, which is too closely connected with the theological controversies of the day, to suit the purposes of this journal. The two points, to which we shall chiefly direct our attention, are the economy of the college, and the state of its library. The Corporation, it seems, have been accused, on the one hand, of excessive prudence in the husbandry of their resources, and on the other, of appropriating too large a portion of them to the augmentation of the library. These charges are not, on the face of them, very plausible, nor even very consistent with each other; and if the enemies of the college can find nothing worse to allege against it, its friends and the public have, perhaps, reason to suppose that its concerns are pretty well managed.

It is the singular and peculiar fortune of Cambridge College to be connected with the earliest history of the country, and identified with the progress of its liberties. Its influence was national; pervading not New England only, but all the Colonies; co-extensive with the firm maintenance of piety and the general regard for the interests of science. It may be questioned, whether it was not an important element in the formation of the character, which terminated in the struggle for independence. Other institutions may, perhaps, come to be more munificently endowed, more numerous attended: but none can ever rival it in the crowd of grateful and deeply interesting associations which belong to Harvard College, as the cherished child of the pilgrims, venerable from its age, almost coeval with the landing of the Fathers.

The whole country has a continued interest in the permanent success of an institution, which was commenced under such auspices. We may all claim that it should be administered in a spirit of just liberality, that its benefits should be dispassionately distributed, that its principles should be elevated above the control of political factions or religious parties, and that its steady advancement should be promoted in proportion to the rapid increase of our national wealth, population, moral influences and responsibilities. And we hold it to be a self-evident maxim, that all this cannot be accomplished without the exercise of a vigilant economy.

Where there is no spirit of thrift, generosity is sure to defeat itself; and an inconsiderate enthusiasm works its own ruin, however pure and exalted may be its purposes. It is a beautiful fable, which tells us of the bird that freely strikes wounds into its breast for the nurture of its brood; and, we doubt not, many a young mother would cheerfully lay down her life for her child. But our *Alma Mater* is in the custody of her sons; and their piety would surely never allow her to languish from the thoughtless excesses of her liberality. Dollars and cents are, after all, the main instrument of efficient action; and thrift is the main support of temporal prosperity. Without thrift, private charity would run rapidly to the condition of the unavailing exercise of a barren good will; and there could be no large expenditures for public charities, no munificent endowment of the sciences, no careful and sufficient provision for the infirm, the aged, and the insane; no continued and untiring appropriations for the diffusion of religion. It is the thrift of New England, which has enabled her thus far, in proportion to her numbers and resources, to contribute to public uses more than any portion of the world; to contribute voluntarily and steadily; to contribute cheerfully and lavishly; and yet to retain her energies unimpaired, or rather to find them refreshed and invigorated by the sacrifice. Hence it is, that so much good has sprung from our barren soil. It was in our Eastern sky, that the star of missionary enterprise first arose; it was here, that the universal establishment of common schools was wisely designed and most happily executed; and it is here, that new associations are perpetually forming for diffusing the blessings of civilization and the influence of religion.

We cannot perceive why the same duty of economy is not

binding upon those, who are the organs for administering the funds, that are devoted to the public exigencies. The general advantage seems rather specially to require the wise and discreet administration of its resources. A lavish expenditure would rapidly impoverish. It forces an individual to humiliating condescensions or downright meannesses, and, by the operation of corresponding causes, it brings public institutions to a pinching parsimony, or,—and we have had an example in America,—to a declared and hopeless bankruptcy. The unrestrained expenditure which we condemn, is twice accursed ; it subverts the foundations of prosperity already laid, and it deters the benevolent from intrusting their contributions to hands which will scatter their munificence. A wise economy, on the contrary, tempts to co-operation. Men readily assist, where a little only is required for the accomplishment of a great purpose ; and thus the governors of a public institution are enabled to foster and sustain every important interest intrusted to their watchfulness, to provide for unforeseen contingencies, to prepare resources against the wastes and the hazards of time. All their movements are marked by freedom and cheerfulness. Under such an administration, the prospect is constantly enlivened by the consciousness of present success and increasing improvement. There is no sinking of the heart before the darkening scowl of anticipated want.

We do not advocate that narrow saving, which chills the expanding efforts at improvement ; and, like a season of drought, destroying excellence in the germ, prevents the developement of that, which, in the issue, would itself have been productive. Such saving is not economy, but a wasteful timidity, a barren poverty of judgment. The economy we commend is a wise husbandry of resources, a perpetual vigilance, admitting neither want nor waste ; a constant reference to the enlarging circumstances of the country ; and a resolute determination to transmit the College to the next generation in as good a situation as its present one, and, if possible, in a situation somewhat better, not abstractly only, but *relatively*, not merely in the aggregate of its endowments and its fixtures, but in reference to the multiplied resources and demands of the country. A sinking fund is a common idea when a nation is in debt. There must be at the College an accumulating fund, or, otherwise, the rapid progress of the rest of the nation will leave Cambridge largely in arrears. The income of that accumu-

lating fund might then be invested, and the annual proceeds of it appropriated to contingent expenses. In this way the College would, as it were, make to itself out of its own revenues a new donation annually, and as the Corporation lives forever, —may the incumbents live to a green old age!—it would eventually be placed on a basis suited to the dignity of the State, and the demands of the community. There is no danger, that the College will have too much money to appropriate, unless it is led astray to found scholarships and set a bounty on literary indolence. Heaven preserve us from such a consummation! But there will forever remain modes of appropriation consistent with the necessity of personal exertions, and directly beneficial to the sciences. Centuries and centuries will roll away, and the task of perfectly organizing a University with all its appropriate fixtures will remain incomplete. There will be enough to do, before its observatories will

———rightly spell
Of every star that Heaven doth show ;

before its garden will contain every flower that sips the dews of our northern climate, and its green-house hold specimens of all the splendid herbs of the tropics ; before its cabinet will have gathered from every sea-shore, and along the margin of our streams, all the infinite varieties of shells, and have collected the minerals of every mountain and every mine. What need of many idle words ? The works of God are infinite ; to a perfect University belong fixtures, which will enable inquisitive minds, each in its selected branch, to learn all that Heaven has condescended to reveal, all that the powers of man permit him to acquire, all that the accumulated intelligence of previous generations has discovered, all that the keen eye of science has brought to light in any part of our globe. If the system pursued in the government of the College should steadily aim at enlarging the usefulness of the Institution, and at rendering it the great University, or one of the great Universities of the country, we venture to predict, that the other points in dispute will give rise only to transient disaffection. The increasing concentration of the sources of intelligence will confirm public confidence and claim public respect. The curious and the ambitious will necessarily throng, where there is the greatest union of abili-

ties and the means of culture. It may, in this connexion and with due reverence be affirmed, that where the carcass is, thither will the young eagles gather.

Shall the Corporation, then, persevere in their efforts at perfecting the Library, which, in a University, is of all fixtures the most essential? On this subject, we quote from Mr. Gray's pamphlet, a passage in which the question is fairly stated, and the true doctrine clearly and ably enforced.

'I have just now mentioned buying books as one fit mode of spending the College funds. There is nothing, which has been more complained of, than our appropriating so much money to the Library. There is nothing, which I am more ready to defend. The Library, great as it is, is still deficient, very deficient in every department. Few of the Professors, I believe, can find in it the books necessary to enable them to perform their duties to the College.

'It has been stated, that till within three or four years, nothing has been appropriated to the Library from the general funds of the College, since the American Revolution. When, therefore, we are asked, "why spend the enormous sum of five thousand dollars in one year upon the Library? why not rather two thousand?" I ask, in turn, why not rather twenty thousand? The only answer I can give to my own question, is, that I thought five thousand the most we could appropriate to that object, with a due regard to all the other interests of the Institution. If the books bought are all good books, selected so as to be best adapted to our present and most pressing wants, highly and permanently useful, and cheap in proportion to their real value, I can hardly find any other limit than our means, to my willingness to buy them.'

'But it has been gravely and repeatedly said, "what need of more books? You have more books now than any body wants to read."—That is true; but not more than *every* body wants to read, or to consult, or to refer to. A man does not go into a Library to read the volumes in order, as they stand on the shelves, or to count them. He goes there to find all the good books, that have ever been written upon the subject, on which his mind is then engaged. To find exactly what he wants, exactly when he wants it, may save him the labor of a life, or make that life a blessing to mankind. Give to Dr. Bowditch thirty thousand volumes, and it would not compensate him or the public for the loss to him of his one *La Place*. In a country, where any value is attached to science or to letters, there ought to be at least one great library containing the means of excitement and improvement for talents of every kind, food for all tastes, weapons for every hand; and

wherever that Library shall be, there will be the centre of instruction for the whole country; there will be the great establishment for education. Moreover, nothing will tend so effectually to build up such an establishment and attract to it efficient teachers as a Library equal to their wants; and we must not be content to have only books, that will be constantly used, and neglect to obtain those above the common reach.

‘Let me suppose, or rather let me state, for I believe it is a fact, that a most accomplished Professor wishes a particular edition of a book, which is not to be found in the country, and desires us to send for it, to enable him to explain to his pupils more fully the meaning of the author he is required to teach them, the charm of his sentiments, and the graces of his style. It is one of those classic writers, who have been regarded for more than two thousand years with admiration and delight by every man of cultivated intellect and refined taste; who have been his teachers in youth, his models perhaps in manhood, and his comforters in age, his companions at home, his guides abroad, shedding light on every path, and breathing consolation in every sorrow. Will it be a sufficient answer to tell him, that though we have not the book he wants, we have a great many that he does not want, and more than he can read, and bid him study them? If the only use of books were to teach us our letters, the argument would be a good one. Any book would do for that. But it cannot be listened to for a moment by any one, who ever entered a library for the purpose of instruction to himself or of benefit to others.’

The propriety of increasing the College Library is here placed upon its right basis. What is the object to be held in view in administering the College? The old fashioned mode of training young persons was doubtless a very commendable one. We approve highly of ‘*digging, construing, and parsing*,’ especially of ‘*digging*,’ since nothing strengthens the mind like diligent exertion. But is this all? If it be, then it is quite useless to make great foundations of any kind; a grammar, a dictionary, and a Latin or Greek book or two, are all the instruments requisite for the very laudable purposes just mentioned. But if something more is expected, if the instructors are themselves to attain to that variety of information, which alone can lead to enlarged and comprehensive views, if the professors are themselves to rise above the mechanical portion of their occupations, and to advance the sciences which they profess, if the mass of learning, which centuries have developed, is to be kept in life and action, then something more than text-

books and dictionaries may be required. Immense literary resources are not requisite for success in drilling ; and a great library is demanded only for an institution, which aims at the accomplishment of higher purposes.

The governors of the College, therefore, in determining to increase the collection of books, have given an earnest of their views respecting the obligations incumbent upon them. They have decided wisely, with a just reference to the condition and rapid progress of the country, to the honor of New England, more especially to the honor of our Commonwealth and its capital, to the best interests of intelligence, to the responsibilities resulting from the accumulated respect, which nearly two centuries of usefulness have conciliated for Harvard.

The character of our free institutions naturally invites to a large and comprehensive liberality in appropriating to our use whatever of excellence has elsewhere been produced. The stranger is welcomed to our shores, from whatever portion of the world he may come ; the rights of citizenship are made common to any, who will reside in the midst of us. It is the prerogative of those, who are distinguished by liberal culture, to rise in an eminent degree above the restrictions of prejudice. Let us, then, make a home in our public seminaries for whatever excellence the world may produce ; and receive into our depositories whatever contributions may be offered to the general stock of human knowledge throughout the world.

If the existence of a separate class of men, as instructors, be requisite to render the foundation of libraries desirable, then we may say, that our country eminently demands them. Where will you find so many devoted to the interests of the rising generation ? Our numerous colleges are well provided with instructors ; schools and academies are scattered broad-cast over the land. The literary class, at least so far as it is engaged in the business of acquiring instruction for the sake of imparting it to the young, is with us, relatively, quite as numerous as in any part of the world ; and if we count all the brotherhood of reviewers, and all the choir of editors, and the long list of those who *have been* editors, and the few writers of books, and the more numerous contributors to *Souvenirs* and magazines, we shall find that these United States count their thousands of writers. The sixty millions who speak the German language are said to have about ten thousand authors ; our twelve or thirteen millions have more than a fifth part of that number. As we

love good sense, as we abhor ignorance, let us give them books. Let them have an opportunity of becoming learned. Let there be one place at least, and many more if possible, where the tone of accurate knowledge is firm and elevated; and since the press is the great moral power of our country, let us have a press, eloquent but not superficial, expansive in its sympathies, yet exact and profound. No objection to the establishment of large libraries can be found in the want of a class of men who should use them.

To the professor, books are essential for the attainment of excellence. It would be as idle to require of him the most finished scholarship in any department, without offering access to a large library, as to require of a mechanic the construction of some piece of nicest workmanship without the employment of the appropriate instruments. The very idea of erudition implies the existence of vast collections; and high attainments cannot reasonably be expected of the teacher, when the means for making those attainments are not within his reach.

If we try by this standard the present Library at Cambridge, we shall find it doubtless to be a respectable one; yet rather as exciting good hopes, than as realizing them. In many departments it is not yet even tolerable. Its catalogue of books on civil law, for example, makes but a sorry figure; and in modern history, excepting only what relates to America, the deficiency is appalling. It would be impossible to verify or correct, by means of it, the history of any nation of the European continent.

A fine library will naturally attract men of good abilities and of a fondness for intellectual researches. As surely as the bees in spring will find their way to the largest flower-gardens, so surely will there be busy inquirers where the materials are abundant. And this is one of the chief hindrances at present to the rapid progress of American literature, the want of a point of union, a common arena, where accomplished minds are jostled in close proximity.

It is quite as evident, that the vicinity of a large collection of books will tend to develop the talents of those who have access to them. The passion for acquisition may display itself as well in nursing a restless craving after accumulated knowledge, as in any way. The fondness for distinction will naturally rouse to exertion, and public expectations are wont to rise, in proportion to the opportunities, which are offered for the attainment of excellence.

There is one circumstance, which merits consideration, as illustrating the claims of the Library to public favor, that it is equally open to all. The poor and the rich may equally lounge in its alcoves; and the orthodox and the heretic, Christian and Pagan, Jew and Gentile, the defender of Babylon and the advocate of prelacy, may each resort to it for instruction and reproof. There can be no favoritism there; and he that brings the strongest mind and most diligent industry, will be sure to meet with the best welcome.

For the ensuring of success in the establishment of a great library, large appropriations are needed. From what quarter shall they come? The Corporation has appropriated five thousand dollars annually. This is doing well according to their means; but it is not enough. A fire-proof building, somewhat remote from other buildings, is required. Besides, the sum we have mentioned is but just enough to keep up with the age; a great many works of former ages remain to be purchased. The King of Prussia, when determined on making Berlin a central point for science and letters, deemed thirty thousand rix dollars a year not too large an appropriation; he made, also, occasional grants for specific purposes. Our Republic stands in need of as great foundations for general culture as the Prussian monarchy, and Boston is a place of more wealth and of more business than Berlin. Who shall aid the Corporation in their efforts?

We answer, those that are able. Every body knows, that the student in his retirement has little to do with finances; the streams of Pactolus have not their sources in the classic regions of contemplative employment. 'The soil of Parnassus is barren, though its air is pure,' is a true remark of an English physician. It is not, then, from the literary class, as such, that large contributions are to be expected. Go into the streets, and learn who are the men, that control the sources of all the prosperity, with which our country rings from side to side. If they are the dealers in iron, the traders to the Indies, the skilful managers of factories, the prudent masters of monied companies, then it is of them that the country invites, requests, demands a fostering care for the endowment of those fixtures, which are essential to the best interests of knowledge.

But it may be said by those, whose industry has borne away the richest prizes, *cui bono*, how does all this tend to *our* advantage? Are we to contribute to purchase books, which we are never to read?

To be sure you are, is our reply. It is perfectly reasonable to expect that you will assist in buying a large collection of books, though it would be most unreasonable to ask of you to read them. You buy lands which you do not till; yet the culture of them turns to your profit. You own ships, which you send to the utmost limits of the sea,—you do not navigate them in person, and yet the returns are for your advantage.

Gold and silver are of use in all transfers of property; but it is not necessary for every one to labor in the mines. The man of letters extracts the gold, puts upon it a stamp, and makes it current coin; do not in your pride think meanly of the laborers in the mines or the servants of the mint. Take the benefit of the general mass of information circulating in society; but remember that old notions, like old coins, lose part of their currency, and require to be stamped anew, if they are to pass freely in the busy world.

We repeat, then, you must buy the books, but there your duty ends; you are not obliged to read them. There are in society men, whose duty it becomes, in conformity with the rightful subdivision of labor, to read them for your benefit, so soon as the means are offered. It is necessary, for example, that there should be a large medical library; and it is important to the community, that there should be among us a class of active, professional men, acquainted with all that has been observed respecting every disease and form of physical evil, to which inherent weakness, or civilization, or virtue, or vice, has exposed poor human nature. But God forbid, that every individual, not of the profession, should store his mind with all the details of men's infirmities, should crowd his imagination with the disgusting images of loathsome illness, should load his memory with all the vile circumstances of a lazaret-house, should be aware of all the intensity of excruciating tortures, which the surgeon relieves, or should know all the frantic creations and saddening tricks of insanity, as exhibited within the gloomy walls of a mad-house. It is essential to the common happiness that all these things should be known, and the memory of them carefully treasured up; but it is fortunately not every man's duty to hoard such melancholy facts.

Apply the same mode of reasoning to the study of Latin and Greek. How often have we seen men contumeliously sneer at the humble pursuits of the philologist, scoff at his diligent investigation of difficult points in grammar, and treat

his labors as insignificant and valueless. Be it so. We will not argue that point. Undoubtedly much of the minute toil, requisite to the formation of a good scholar, is mere drudgery ; yet, as times and manners are, the habits of cultivated nations and the approved modes of education, it is on any view requisite and desirable, that all the results of philological research should be possessed by living men. And hence the necessity of an immense critical apparatus, which the opulent will seldom consult, though they must contribute to its purchase.

We might multiply illustrations. What branch of knowledge is more interesting than that which records the fortunes of the human race ? Yet to make history valuable, there must be for the inquirer ready access to the sources, and abundant opportunity offered for verifying the details. Most of us read not more than one history of Rome. What confusion of ideas would Niebuhr's history have occasioned in the minds of men, in a community where there was no erudition ? The opportunity for research is the best safeguard against incredulity ; and we shall take things quite enough on trust, even if we have the materials of re-production within our reach.

But is there to be no end to this purchase of books ? Oh yes,—and let us see what it is. When the public library has redeemed from time all the valuable intellectual bequests of former ages, when it has garnered up all that preceding generations had amassed as a sacred and imperishable inheritance, there will then remain no duty, but to collect what the age produces. And when literary ambition shall cease to be excited ; when genius is no longer bestowed by the munificence of Heaven ; when industry no longer collects new facts respecting man or nature ; when the forming hand ceases to re-produce ; when the streams of human intellect no longer flow ; when the springs of intelligence and thought are all dried up ; when the regions of science and of mind sleep in a universal lethargy, then it will be time to give over buying books ; and then, too, there will be no need of a university at Cambridge, and no functions for a college corporation.

In fine, we think that the present movement in favor of the Library, on the part of the governors of Harvard, is not to be attributed to the transient impulse of a magnificent, ephemeral enthusiasm ; but is rather the result of a right understanding of their duty, is approved by the deliberate judgment of the community, and is in strict accordance with the public requisitions and wants.